

The purpose of this notice is to provide residents with a new alternative to the traffic diversion plan for Argyle Street. A public comment period on the new alternative will be open through Thursday, August 31, 2006. Following the public comment period, the City Manager will make a final decision on this project.

The new alternative was developed after receiving comments from the community during and after the public meeting held on March 31, 2006. This new alternative consists of the following:

1. Maintain two-way traffic on Argyle Street;
2. Implement a 24-hour left-turn restriction from South Washington Street on to East Argyle Street;
3. Implement a left-turn restriction 7-9 AM from West Argyle Street on to Maryland Avenue; and
4. Implement Argyle Street Sidewalk Concept 2A with parking restrictions.

The new alternative supports objectives presented with previous staff recommendations, which include:

1. Reduce traffic volumes on Argyle Street to levels below thresholds which qualify the street for a traffic diversion plan based on the City's Neighborhood Traffic Control Guidelines;
2. Minimize the potential for major changes in traffic volumes on adjacent neighborhood streets; and
3. Improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.

In addition to the aforementioned objectives the new alternative achieves the objective of retaining two-way traffic flow on Argyle Street between Maryland Avenue and Monroe Street.

Background

In February 2005, residents of East Argyle Street and South Washington Street requested that the City close access to East Argyle Street at its intersection with Monroe Street. In response, staff conducted technical analyses and public outreach from March 2005 to March 2006.

During the latest public meeting held in March 2006, staff presented the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Designate Argyle Street as a one-way street heading westbound between Monroe Street and Maryland Avenue;
2. Implement Argyle Street Sidewalk Concept 2A with parking restrictions;
3. Contact Montgomery County Public Schools to ensure their buses not to use Argyle or South Washington Streets;
4. Eliminate trucks on Argyle Street;
5. Post directional signs to Dogwood Park on Maryland Avenue to lead traffic to Fleet Street instead of South Washington and Argyle Streets, in an effort to reroute traffic using East Argyle Street to access Dogwood Park; and
6. Monitor signal timing at the intersections of Fleet Street/Monroe Street and Fleet Street/Maryland Avenue.

Recommendations 3-6 listed above have been addressed (via signage) and/or implemented since March 2006. Items 1 and 2 have been under review by staff and the community. Two concerns raised with the recommendations presented in March 2006 were: (1) the peak hour volume on Argyle Street was still above the threshold of 150 vehicles/hour in one-way during the 7-8 AM hour, and (2) the options for Argyle Street residents to access their homes and exiting their street were minimized. The new alternative - presented earlier in this notice addresses those two concerns while minimizing any potential increase of traffic volumes on adjacent residential streets. The new alternative is also expected to achieve the following:

- a) Significant traffic volume reduction on Argyle and South Washington Streets below 24-hour, peak-hour one-way, and peak-hour two-way thresholds.
- b) Maintain access to Argyle Street from Monroe Street. This will retain access for surrounding community residents.
- c) Retain access to 609 Monroe Street. Argyle Street is the primary access point for this residence.

Travel times to I-270 are expected to increase between 7-9 AM for drivers who would otherwise use Argyle Street from Monroe Street to access I-270 due to the fact that they would have to use the Monroe Street/Fleet Street/Maryland Avenue route rather than the more direct Argyle Street to Maryland Avenue route. Travel times will also increase for traffic traveling from Maryland Avenue to Monroe/Argyle since the left-turn movement from South Washington Street to East Argyle Street will be restricted. The average differences in travel time were estimated to be 64 seconds and 9 seconds during the AM and PM peak periods, for the two travel routes, respectively. Those estimates were based on travel runs performed by staff and presented to the residents during the public meetings held in fall 2005. It should be also noted that Argyle residents would experience delays during the 7-9 AM period if traveling to I-270. Instead of turning left at the Maryland/Argyle signal, they will have to use either South Washington or Monroe/Fleet/Maryland route. The average delay was measured and expected to be between 2 and 3 minutes.

The table below shows the latest traffic volumes, thresholds, theoretical traffic reduction, and projected traffic volume after implementing the new alternative for two-way traffic on Argyle Street:

	Latest Volumes/ Thresholds	Theoretical Reduction (# of Cars)	Projected Traffic Volume
7-8 AM	211/200	181	30
8-9 AM	138/200	118	20
4-5 PM	136/200	59	77
5-6 PM	175/200	83	92
24-Hour	2164/2000	983	1181

- As shown in the table above traffic volumes on East Argyle Street between South Washington Street and Monroe Street would theoretically decrease daily by 45% from 2,164 to 1,181 vehicles, a level lower than any traffic volume measured on this road section during the last 30 years, and below the threshold established in the City's Neighborhood Traffic Control Guidelines.
- Traffic volumes on Argyle Street between Maryland Avenue and Monroe Street is also expected to be reduced significantly during the AM peak period to a level below the 150 and 200 vehicles per hour for the one-way and two-way thresholds, respectively. The traffic during this period (7 AM – 9 AM) will mostly consist of local residents traveling toward Monroe Street or eastbound on Maryland Avenue.

Next Steps

1. A public comment period on the new option will be open through August 31, 2006.
2. The City Manager will make a decision on what option(s) to implement.
3. Traffic order will be prepared to install signs indicating new traffic patterns on Argyle Street. Installation typically takes 4-6 weeks.
4. Coordination with Police to enforce the traffic restrictions.
5. Sidewalk will be implemented on Argyle Street in fall 2006.
6. Follow-up traffic counts will be conducted in late fall 2006 on Argyle Street and adjacent streets to analyze changes in traffic patterns and volumes due to the traffic restrictions.
7. Continue signal timing monitoring at Fleet Street and Monroe Street, and at Maryland Avenue and Fleet Street to ensure that the network operates efficiently. The traffic signal at Maryland/Argyle will be also modified to reflect the new traffic volume during the 7-9 AM period, i.e., less green time will be provided for traffic coming out of Argyle Street.

If you would like to submit comments about the new alternative to the traffic diversion plan for Argyle Street, please send them by August 31, 2006 to the attention of:

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